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THE GOSPEL OF
GOOD HEALTH

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THE GOSPEL OF GOOD HEALTH

BY

CHARLES REYNOLDS BROWN



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GENERAL

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And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

REVELATION 22 : 1, 2.

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THE

GOSPEL OF GOOD HEALTH

IN the vision of the seer, "the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." The leaves, rather than the fruit, became in his mind the graceful symbols of the divine interest in the curing of disease. The leaves represent that which is incidental, a kind of by-product. The main business of the tree was to produce fruit; it bore fruit every month — "all manner of fruit" — and undoubtedly the same kind of fruit as that named by the apostle. Now "the fruit of the Spirit," he says, "is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, mildness, and self-control." These useful moral qualities are the fruits of the Spirit; the type of character here indicated is the real fruit which the tree of life is intended to produce in the garden of human experience. But incidental to its main purpose, thrown in as you might say, there is a further ministry to good health — "the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

I wish to make this distinction clear at the outset because in all our communities there are groups of religiously disposed people who make physical healing the central object of

their interest. They talk about it, they think about it, they write about it, incessantly. In their published statements they deny the very existence of disease, but with a curious inconsistency they at once proceed to spend their main strength in a heroic effort to heal that non-existent illness without the use of drugs. In doing this they virtually narrow down their religious interest to the business of raising leaves. When the day of judgment comes it is to be feared that many of them will have "nothing but leaves" to show, for the reason that they have been slighting the weightier matters of useful and unselfish service in their zeal to "demonstrate" their ability to keep these perishable bodies in good trim. To do this is to unduly exalt that which is incidental and make it central.

We shall part company with these physical bodies of ours very soon at best. The great question therefore is not whether a man has a good liver and a sound stomach, but whether he is sane and true, whether he is upright, unselfish, serviceable in his personal character. These groups of people who make physical healing their chief concern can show a considerable number of cures of a certain sort — they are in the leaf business and it would be strange if they did not at times produce fairly good crops of these leaves. But when you make inquiry as to the general yield of fruit in the form of useful service, when you ask them about providing homes for the orphans and the aged, about making

provision for the poor through wisely administered and generously sustained charities, about bringing to bear those better influences upon the neglected portions of our cities through social settlements and other valued forms of endeavor, about providing well-rounded Christian men and women thoroughly furnished for every good work, they have not much to say for themselves. They have unfortunately been occupied for the most part in raising those leaves which are for the healing of certain minor bodily ailments.

Their successes are confined almost entirely, if not altogether, to the correction of functional troubles as distinct from cases of organic disease. I have known many persons who have been relieved from headaches, indigestion, and other similar disorders by mental therapeutics. I have never known of a case of organic disease, where the presence of the disease was conclusively established by competent diagnosis before the treatment began and the cure of it similarly proved at the end, to be healed by that line of effort alone. The principle of suggestion has great value in maladies which have their origin in nervous or mental disorders, but it seems thus far to have had little or no efficacy in the face of serious organic disease such as cancer, tuberculosis, or Bright's disease. It would surely be for the safety of children and of the untaught generally, if mental healers could be induced either by law or

by the power of public opinion to confine their efforts to that class of cases where scientific research and wide experience unite in indicating that suggestive therapeutics may operate with some hope of success.

But having pointed out the distinction between what is central and what is incidental to the main purpose of the gospel, I wish to ask what is here offered us in our Bible for our health. The Church of Jesus Christ ought to "teach health," not as its chief business, but as a leaf on the tree of its main purpose, which, as already indicated, is to produce the good fruit of Christian character and service. We have been unnecessarily frightened perhaps by the nonsense and wild-fire which so often characterize this phase of religious experience. We have neglected what had better have been patiently cultivated with intelligence and love. We would not have so many religious side-shows to-day if the performance in the main tent had been to a greater degree well-rounded and complete. We ought to be able to offer to all who come the total helpfulness of the gospel of the Son of God.

It has seemed to me that in the last half of the nineteenth century there was a widespread tendency to depend too much on the without and not enough on the within. Westward the star of empire took its way for centuries, seeking new fields for material development. Now, as some one said the other day, "Inward the star of empire takes its

way." There has come a wholesome reaction from the almost idolatrous trust in material things and a quickening of interest in forces unseen. Men and women have begun anew to cultivate, to honor, to confide in, that which is within, and this disposition shows itself in many ways. The kingdoms of this world, bodily health, mental development, social charm, useful action, are by this movement from within becoming more truly and steadily kingdoms of the Spirit of Christ — no longer rebellious, no longer separate and independent, but submissive and harmonious kingdoms of the divine Spirit.

And I believe the main hope of our Christian world for improved health, and for the consequent larger joy and effectiveness, lies not so much in the increased efficiency of medical science in dealing with disease when it has actually fastened upon the patient, important as this is — I believe our main hope lies in so strengthening the inner life as to secure increased immunity from the inroads of disease.

Here is a gold mine, not far away in the mountains, but deeply buried in your own inner life! It has never been adequately worked. You have your mind and spirit always with you, and they are always in touch with all your members; they sustain unbrokenly sympathetic and vital relations with all those functions upon which we depend for healthy life. These inner forces may be utilized by intelligent faith and a wisely directed

will in a way that will put you in possession of wonderful values which for years, perhaps, have been hidden under the soil of thoughtlessness and indifference. You can, if you will, dig down and develop that which is within you, so that it will earn for you and for those you love priceless dividends!

Let me indicate, then, certain points in this gospel of good health as it stands declared in Holy Scripture.

First of all, right thoughts as the prevailing habit of one's mental life — "*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.*" This does not mean that a single thought will cure a cancer or even fill an aching tooth — the men who wrote the Bible were not crazy. It does mean that states of mind tend constantly to register themselves in consequent physical conditions. Morbid conditions of mind mean, by and by, morbid conditions of body. Weakness, irresolution, fear, prepare a soil altogether favorable for the seeds of disease. On the other hand, healthy states of mind — minds free from all grudge, bitterness, envy, minds filled with faith and hope and love — make for health as do sunshine, fresh air, and pure water. As a man thinketh in his heart, steadily and insistently, be it up or down, so he tends to become!

It is a great deal harder to cultivate right thoughts, right desires, right purposes so that they shall always bear rule within, than it is to go and take something out of a bottle — the real heights of human experience are

never reached without hard climbing. But the cry "Good health for a dollar a bottle" is rapidly becoming a spent force. The cry of good health at the price of the cultivation and training of all one's powers, physical, mental, spiritual, by bringing them into joyous harmony with the revealed will of God, is now to the fore.

And this mode of treatment has this further advantage, that it may, and to be genuinely and permanently efficacious must, include the culture and development of the entire inner life in a way that taking something out of a bottle does not. Many of us will live to see the day when there will be growing on all sides these trees of life covered with leaves for the healing of the nations; and the common people, having heard the good news gladly, will be constantly utilizing this source of help for their improved health. Strive to reach the point where you can look up and say, "Thy thoughts are my thoughts, and thy ways are my ways, O Lord," and you will have gone far toward the realization of that high claim, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

The main forms of fear which destroy our peace of mind and thus invite the approach of certain forms of disease are these — the fear of ill-health, the fear of adversity, the fear of bereavement, and the fear of failing in the performance of duty. Other fears there may be, but they are unimportant as compared with these four main forms; and in the very forefront of all harassing apprehension

marches this terrible fear of possible physical inadequacy.

It cannot be lightly regarded; we cannot shoo it away by a wave of the hand or by some fantastic flourish of the mind. The people who assert that the thing feared has no reality are simply flighty. Sickness and pain, disease and death, are all stern realities to be met and faced, and, as far as may be, conquered. The vital question is in what mood we can best approach them when they come.

I know of none better than the high mood of the singer who sang in olden time, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." With all the practical wisdom you have shape means to ends; lay hold of every available form of assistance in averting and counter-acting sickness, sorrow, adversity, and failure. But when all visible forms of assistance are in place, know that it will add to your prospect of victory immeasurably if you make your struggle unabashed, unafraid, because you have caught the spirit of that song and have embodied it in those thought habits which dominate your inner life.

I will not fear! Suppose each morning when you awake to a hard day, you utilize the well-known principle of mental suggestion by deliberately storing the mind with right thoughts. Begin your day with the repetition of certain assurances from Holy Writ, uttering them over and over with your lips and your mind and your soul, until the full strength of them is felt in every cell of your

being. "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." "In quietness and in confidence shall be my strength." "Be still, and know that he is God." "The Lord of hosts is with me; the God of Jacob is my refuge." "Fear not, only believe—all things are possible to him that believeth." "I know Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." "He forgiveth all my iniquities; he healeth all my diseases; he redeemeth my life from destruction; he satisfieth my mouth with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's!" Begin the day with these promises ringing in your ears, singing through the secret chambers of your mind, throbbing with added strength in the pulsations of your heart! When you relax the tired muscles and the weary brain at night as you sink to sleep, do it with these same confident assurances furnishing your final mood and yielding their wholesome, restful influence through all the hours of sleep!

I cannot tell you all it would mean for you to do just this, but I could tell you much. My report would be born of long experience in a busy, strenuous life where all the aids, seen and unseen, were needed, and where when once brought into commission they have vindicated the high claims I here advance on their behalf. The habit of serious, resolute, trustful meditation upon these divine assurances, once formed and held, works its own marvels. Souls once timid and despairing are

led to say, "We never saw it on this fashion." The verifiable results of such a practise upon health, upon mental adequacy, upon character, delicate and imperceptible though they seem at first, are increasingly registered upon the life within until they utter themselves in an enlarged and well-grounded efficiency for all life's tasks. This is what the Psalmist said — he was perfectly aware of the fact that life would not be all green pastures and still waters; he would be compelled to walk in and through the valley of many a shadow, but, come what might, still he would not fear nor be afraid. The man whose inmost soul is filled with and possessed by such thoughts finds himself strongly fortified against the encroachments of disease.

In the second place, high expectations as the fundamental choice of your deepest and best self — "*According to your faith be it unto you.*" The language of Scripture is almost always the language of great expectation, the only condition put upon it being the receptivity of men. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" — there is no lack of material with the Lord. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord; make your consecration complete, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out such a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." "Stand up straight, the ceiling is high" — you will not bump your head! According to your faith, your openness, your willingness, your capacity, be it unto you!

There is nothing shadowy or unreal about it — men do become very largely what they expect to become in that hidden faith which does not always utter itself in formal creeds, but shows itself in shaping those persistent aspirations which control the life. Include within the firm grip of your anticipation this physical nature, coveting for it earnestly the best there is, and according to your faith be it unto you!

The people who are continually expecting to catch all the diseases that are going, rarely fail — they usually catch them all. The people who live in perpetual fear and dread and apprehension almost always realize, not their worst fears entire — that would be expecting too much — but a good working percentage of them. According to their expectation it is gradually wrought out for them in actual experience.

On the other hand, the quiet, serene confidence of the intelligent physician, of the trained nurse, or of the well-poised individual in ordinary life, is like a steel armor against all the attacks of disease, as each one goes courageously about his business. According to their faith it is unto them, and the result is vastly different. If every one could form the habit of going about with those same familiar words from the Twenty-third Psalm on his lips, in his mind, deeply embedded in his heart, — “I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me! I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me!” — I do not say it would enable him

to lie down with rattlesnakes or to drink water out of a malarial swamp unhurt, but it would add to his prospects for good health, in some cases thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundredfold. Pitch your expectation high — look for the best, hope for the best, strive for the best, and according to your faith be it unto you!

In the third place, firm resolution as the uncompromising attitude of your will — “*O woman, great is thy faith! be it unto thee even as thou wilt!*” Here was a mother whose daughter was afflicted with one of those nervous maladies — epilepsy we call it now — which often baffle the skill of our best physicians to this hour. It seemed to the people of that day, untrained in scientific diagnosis, as they saw her writhing in her distress, that she was “grievously tormented with a devil.” The best account of the matter they knew how to give was to the effect that the nature of the child had been overborne by some hostile, malicious personality resident within.

The woman was an outsider, a Canaanite, but she came boldly to Christ, saying, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. Have mercy on my child.” She was not only a heathen, she was noisy and inconsiderate. The disciples said, “Send her away,” but she only cried the more earnestly to Christ. Then Jesus said to her gently, “I am sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Still she was not repulsed — she said, “Lord, help me.” But Jesus said, further testing her

resolution, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs." And the woman replied, "Yes, Lord, the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table—give me a crumb of divine help." Her determination leaped all the barriers of race and distance, all the obstacles which a chronic and painful illness interposed! And Jesus said to her, "O woman, great is thy faith! be it unto thee even as thou *wilt!*" Faith expressing itself in determination had won the day—her daughter was healed from that hour!

If you will stand up, your mind and heart made right with God to the fullest extent you know, and in God's name say, "Let there be health," and keep on saying it resolutely, trustfully, hopefully, that very action of your inner life will work wonders. I do not say that no disease can stand before you, for you are not omnipotent, but I do say that you will set in operation one of the great healing forces of the world.

All about us there are people who have stopped talking about their ills, stopped thinking about them, stopped pitying themselves, who are saying in the way indicated, "Let there be health," and there is health! It is done unto them at last even as they will. When people fix their eyes on something high, fine, useful, linking their determination with the purpose of God for them, and say bravely and steadily, We will! we will! we will! they are putting themselves in a position to

come off more than conquerors through Him who loves us.

I have tried to practise what I preach in this matter, and I feel that I have earned the right to speak as one having some measure of experience. I have never been one of those people, to whom Ian Maclaren refers, who are "so brutally and offensively healthy as to feel no true sympathy for those who are fighting for their very lives." I was not born a very robust baby, and many of my years have been years of physical struggle; and with some of those ills I struggle now. But some twenty years ago I learned better how to fight—I gained some new weapons; I began to practise a different formation. This has meant a long series of victories. I have been in the active pastorate now over nineteen years, and in all that time I have never missed any kind of an appointment on account of sickness.

It is eighteen years ago this winter since I first began to hear people discuss the grippe, which had then become epidemic under that title. If I could recall all that I have heard about that malady related by those who were temporarily suffering from it, I feel sure that I could write a natural history of the grippe, giving all the symptoms in order and rehearsing all the unhappy results of it. This endless discoursing upon it was not beneficial to those who made the painful recitals—it is never wise to talk without a purpose, and unless one is talking

to his physician, or his nurse, or his pastor, or some member of his family about his ills with some definite and wholesome end in view, he had better not talk about them at all.

But with all the cases I have visited and with all the discussions to which I have listened, I have never had the grippe myself; I never expect to have it, and I do not rap wood when I say so, for there is nothing of magic in it. Some honest attention to God's laws of health, which are as sacred as the Ten Commandments; some ability to cherish right thoughts and maintain a serene confidence, and some power of resolution have been sufficient thus far to safeguard me from any inroad of that particular malady. Insist on being well; go to bed with that idea and get up with it; carry it about with you as you carry your own face and hands about with you — and somehow you are apt to find that it is unto you even as you will!

And finally, have faith in God as the Supreme Friend and Helper of all our lives. "*Have faith in God,*" Jesus said to his trembling disciples, and although he sent them forth with neither purse nor scrip, they found in this new and high confidence in which he had established them, an abiding source of personal reenforcement and an ample furnishing for a widely beneficent service.

In a certain Eastern city there is a hospital which I used to pass and repass, and it always did me good just to look up at it.

The building is brick, but set in the front of it is a broad marble slab, and on it in letters of gold are these plain words, "HAVE FAITH IN GOD." It is a Christian hospital, as you might imagine. Hundreds of sufferers, borne thither in the ambulance or assisted up the walk by loving friends, have looked up at those words as they passed in at the door. I am sure the words have given an added courage to many an anxious heart. Hundreds of sufferers have there been cured as human intelligence and human love have co-operated with those healing forces which are altogether divine. As they walked away, rejoicing in health regained, perhaps they looked back at those words of gold, and were made by the message they conveyed more deeply grateful to Him who had wrought with his chosen servants for their recovery. Have faith in God — they are good words to have engraved upon a building devoted to healing, or upon the walls of one's home, or deeply embedded within one's heart! They point ever to a sure source of inexhaustible help.

We have often been afraid to aim boldly for that simple, original, spiritual potency of early Christianity which in the days of the apostles healed the sick at the same time that it was saving the soul from sin. Yet even if we tried and failed, it would do us good to aim high. But under the blind leadership of certain fanatics, many people have been led to feel that if they undertook to ex-

ercise faith in God's power to heal directly, they were estopped from using any material remedies. This is the sheerest nonsense. The Almighty is not so touchy as to withhold his spiritual aid, because the patient is also using some material remedy which he himself expressly created for the use of his children. Those narrow-minded people ought not to think that God is another such a one as themselves!

But, we are told with an air of finality, there is no record that Jesus ever used drugs. That is true — there is no record that he ever did. There is no record that he ever used an elevator or a telephone, but he would be a foolish man who would insist to-day upon climbing the stairs to the top of a high building or upon doing all his errands on foot, because Jesus never used an elevator or a telephone. Sometimes a drug which God made and which men have learned to use, will accomplish a certain result more easily and more quickly than it could be accomplished (if indeed it could be accomplished at all) by purely mental and spiritual forces. He would be a foolish man indeed who would lightly decline its help.

And the very people who declaim so loudly against the use of drugs in time of sickness, all use soap. Soap is a drug; it is sold at the drug stores; its action is chemical. If a person were furnished with plenty of hot water and time enough, he might wash his hands, his face, or his clothing clean without

soap, but it can be done more quickly and easily with soap; and for that reason all sensible people use this drug we call soap. The very people who become so agitated over the use of drugs in healing disease constantly use soap without realizing, apparently, how very funny they are making themselves by their inconsistency.

Have faith, then, in God, with no fear whatsoever that you are discrediting your faith in him by employing all those useful aids which he has created and appointed for our benefit! Have faith in God, and gather to yourself all the mighty aid which you can claim out of the Unseen for your perfect restoration!

The divine readiness to aid us along physical lines reaches farther than we dream. In certain quarters those wild and extravagant guesses which always precede sober investigation and verifiable knowledge are being made, and they frequently repel the more discriminating minds in the community. But astronomy was not first—astrology was first, the awe, the wonder and the interest of men in the stars leading to all manner of fanciful claims. This gradually gave place to an exact science which now maps out the courses the planets take, measures the distances of the stars from each other and from us, weighs their huge bulk, and by its spectrum analysis determines even the fuel they burn. Chemistry was not first—alchemy was first with its wild attempts to transmute the baser metals into precious gold and to

work all kinds of magic. It pointed the way for the coming of that exact science which to-day lays whole communities under obligation to it, as it works out valued results in manufacture and in agriculture, in the treatment of disease, and in those sanitary measures which safeguard the health of the community.

In similar fashion those movements called "Christian Science," "The Home of Truth," or "New Thought" are the astrology and the alchemy of modern life, pointing the attention of the world in a direction where useful investigation will presently discover values unsuspected as yet. We are not to be deceived nor repelled by the wild guesses or the extravagant claims made. We are not to take leave of our senses, nor to make assertions which were not true in the beginning, are not true now, and never shall be true, world without end. We are to separate the wheat from the chaff and then sow it in the good soil of patient, intelligent, sympathetic effort, where it will bring forth in some cases thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundred-fold of increased bodily vigor.

We must find and utilize all the help open to us through mental and spiritual agencies for the gaining and the maintenance of sound health. And in this undertaking we are to feel that the One who stood of old upon the shore of the Sea of Galilee speaking in sympathetic but confident tones to that boat-load of discouraged men about their physical

needs, is with us yet and for us ever. "Children, have ye any health?" his voice cries at this hour! "Cast your hope and your faith and your power of will on the right side and ye shall find." And when we realize the full measure of help open to us in that quarter we shall say, as the apostle said of old, but with a new and a profounder gratitude, "It is the Lord."

You will make a sad mistake if you neglect that sympathetic figure on the shore who watches you as you struggle through long nights and long days upon the sea of human effort, often taking nothing, or as you fight against the inroads of some dread disease. You will live far below the appropriate level of thought, of feeling, of moral action and of bodily health as well, if you neglect His offer of assistance. When the question comes, "Children, are you gaining the deepest desires of your hearts?" you will be compelled to answer him, "No." Watch for him, then, on the shore of every sea. Listen for his voice of sympathetic interest. Cast your net of effort as he bids you, for he is bringing to us at this hour, in the very turning of the popular mind to these lines of aspiration and effort, a fresh assurance of the divine recognition of all these needs and of the divine readiness to aid us in the fulfilment of our highest hopes!

In undertaking to use these mental and spiritual aids for the gaining and maintenance of sound health, we shall in no wise

advance the cause by any sort of pretense or make-believe. I have heard companies of well-fed, well-dressed people, sitting easily on cushioned seats, behind stained glass, their minds considerably befogged by persistent attempts to believe what their common sense told them was not true — I have heard such companies of people say, "There is no reality in sin, sickness, disease, poverty, or death. All is good and all is God. Everything in the world is just lovely, and we are just lovely, too."

It is a very economical view to take of the matter. If there is no such thing as poverty or sickness, then of course we are not called upon to give any of our money to maintain homes, hospitals, relief societies, or associated charities. But it is untrue; it is a "false claim" which is leading scores of confused and indiscriminating people to become complacent, self-centered, self-satisfied, morally indifferent to the stern needs about them. Sin is a fact — young men not out of their teens take pieces of gas-pipe and beat the brains out of helpless victims in order to rob them. Crime is a fact — men who stand erect upon two feet, but who are in all other respects lower than the four-footed animals, perpetrate their crimes against the honor and purity of young womanhood. Poverty is a fact — a hard, bitter, unyielding fact, showing itself the relentless enemy of the bodily, intellectual, and moral well-being of those who suffer under its heel. We cannot

scare it away with big, unmeaning words or by any silly pretense that it does not exist. It can only be relieved by generous, intelligent, persistent service. Disease and death are perpetually recurring facts, bringing sorrow in their train to the homes of those who hold the fantastic theories as well as to those who still trust the evidence of their five senses. We cannot dispose of the tribulation of the world by vague talk about there being no reality to it. There must be a fearless facing of the facts of experience as they are, coupled with a reasonable reliance upon those forms of help which have often been neglected because they were unseen.

With that open-eyed honesty, then, which shuns nothing and hides nothing, take these gospel ingredients, right thoughts, high expectations, firm resolution, faith in God, and employ them in the interests of a more complete and abiding state of health. Mix them together, shake them well, use them freely! You need not measure them out narrowly with a drop tube or a teaspoon — there is nothing in them which will hurt you — take as much of them as you can contain. They will do you good and only good.

I do not offer them, wholesome though they are, as an infallible panacea for all the ills there are. We cannot, even with these aids, banish all suffering, disease, and death. One whose right thoughts, high expectations, firm resolution and faith in God, utterly tran-

scended anything we can expect to attain in this present world, suffered. "He learned obedience by the things that he suffered," the Bible says. If any enthusiast in his presence had claimed that there was "no reality in sin, sickness, disease, or death," he would have regarded such a one as not altogether in his right mind. When wicked men drove nails through his feet and hands, and when they pierced his side with a spear, he suffered and died.

In like manner, if you are overtaken by cruel accident, or if you are loaded down with more work and care and necessary anxiety than you have strength to bear, you will suffer and it may be you will incur some painful illness. And the time will come when we shall all suffer and die. When we have done our best, living under present conditions, in crowded cities, with the water and food supply often contaminated, with the air we breathe becoming sometimes the agent of disease rather than of health, a certain amount of sickness is inevitable. Reduce the volume of it by wise sanitation and by taking all personal precautions possible, and yet a certain percentage of people will be ill at some time during the year.

And even that which is best in us sometimes becomes the occasion of a depleted vitality. The father's unselfish ambition for the well-being of his children, for their education, or their social standing, coupled with his desire to start them in life on a better footing than

that which he enjoyed, carries him into an amount of overwork which means a breakdown. And many a mother suffers from dragging ill-health because she gave so freely from her own store of vitality to her children. And the sympathetic nature of many another, in the face of the struggles of those who are dear, yields itself so unreservedly to them as to lower its own life forces. Do our best, it still remains true that a considerable section of the whole creation groans and travails in physical pain at some time during its career.

There are offsets and compensations standing over against all such unavoidable ills. If you had eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand, you got something of great value out of your last illness. It did not simply bring you the customary feeling of resentment coupled with a huge doctor's bill — it would not let you go until it had blessed you. It brought you what the Psalmist pictured, an enlargement and enrichment of your whole being — “Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.”

When you are called to lie upon a bed of pain for many months, or to spend tiresome weeks in a hospital, or to lie awake through the lonely nights and hear the clock strike the weary hours when sleep is denied, you may, if you will, transmute all this into higher qualities of mind and heart. You may come to the point where your sympathies go out as they never did before to the whole army of

patient sufferers; you may learn to think with an added tenderness of those who lack the comfort and alleviation you enjoy, in their time of pain; you may enter into a new appreciation of the faithful, unselfish heroism of the poor who aid each other in their times of trial; you may so pass through that period of distress as to be enlarged in your whole attitude toward the ills of the world.

When we go along prosperously and joyously, able to eat three meals a day and sleep eight hours every night, able to take the car for the place of business at the usual hour each morning with never an interruption, and able to do our full share of the world's work, rejoicing in the chance to do it, we may begin to fancy that this flesh which walls about our life is brass impregnable. We may grow callous and careless touching those lives which are struggling against heavier odds than ours, those lives which sometimes go down for a month or two in physical defeat. If any man's heart is becoming small, tight, and hard by this round and round of pleasant experiences, it may be that there is no other way for his sympathies to be brought back to a more abundant life than for him to travel the way of pain and distress himself. Whether this is the only way or not, it is one way — many a man comes through such an ordeal to walk a bit more slowly for the rest of his days but with new sympathy for all his fellows. When he looks down into his own heart he

says with profound gratitude, "The Lord enlarged me when I was in distress."

But having made room for that illness which is apparently unavoidable, and having indicated a certain high office it may perform in moral growth, I would again strongly insist that it is not only the part of expediency but morally imperative for every one to do all that lies in his power to be well, steadily and joyously well. It is part of our Christian duty to so obey God's laws of health, which are as sacred as if he had actually spoken them aloud from Sinai, to so order our habits with reference to the maintenance of a high degree of effectiveness, to so utilize all means, material and spiritual, which make for soundness, that we shall be up to the mark in physical health.

I beseech you, as did the apostle of old, to present your bodies a living — not a half-dead nor a diseased but a living — offering unto God, holy and acceptable, for this is your reasonable service. Barring out accidents or unhappy hereditary burdens or the overwork which sometimes seems inevitable, it lies within the power of a great number of us to be thus ready for service three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. And in setting forth with that high resolve we shall receive unspeakable reenforcement from those allies which are inner and spiritual. I make no unreal or extravagant claims for this gospel of good health, but I know from the Word of God, from long years of experience, and

from wide observation, that right thoughts, high expectations, firm resolution, and faith in God are for our health. They are leaves on the tree of life to be used for the healing of the nations.

You have all noticed where this tree of life stood — “in the middle of the street.” It grew and flourished, offering its gracious and accessible ministry, there in the center of a city whose walls are great and high. The tree of healing was not remote from the common life, only to be found in some far-away garden to which none but the privileged might go. It was not shut away in some sacredly guarded enclosure where only the chosen few were admitted. It grew right in the middle of the street, accessible to all, a part of the common, daily environment.

We do not need to make pilgrimages to some distant shrine, or to go apart into some mystical occult sect, or to use prescribed language which no one quite understands, in order to avail ourselves of this help. Right here, where we are carrying on the work of ordinary life, where we are using our common sense in our daily duties, we find this splendid tree with healing in its very leaves, growing in the middle of the busy street. If you will take those leaves and use them habitually, it will be good for the body and good as well for the soul. Indeed you cannot use them with the highest effectiveness until your moral purposes are altogether right. The very fact that God is pure, that God is love, makes it

plain that his total helpfulness will only dwell where purity and love are. You will find therefore, in seeking to rightly use the leaves of the tree for the healing of your bodily ills, that you will be led also to eat the fruit of the tree which will give you life everlasting.



Brown

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